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RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 1079
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RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 8377
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RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

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SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS
E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Iran
- [1](#)2. Mideast
- [1](#)3. Global Democracy

Key stories in the media:

Israel Radio reported that on Wednesday Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz, who is in charge of the strategic dialogue with the US, met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns. The radio reported that Israel presented the US with intelligence on Iran. Mofaz told the radio that Iran's nuclear program has not yet reached the point of "no return" and that IAEA Director Mohamed ElBaradei's attitude is "endangering the world." Israel Radio also reported that Mofaz told the administration officials that the PA is not honoring its commitments under the Roadmap. The Jerusalem Post reported that Defense Minister Ehud Barak told a Labor Party forum that a military operation is a viable option for dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat.

Ha'aretz reported that the PA wants the preface to the joint statement at Annapolis to say that a final-status arrangement will be completed within six months. The newspaper noted that Secretary Rice has already informed PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas that the US will not support his time line for a final-status agreement. The Palestinian negotiating team recommends that the preface indicate that both parties are to fulfill their mutual obligations under the first stage of the road map within six months. The proposal, if adopted, would require Israel to dismantle illegal outposts and halt construction in the West Bank settlements. The PA claims it has already fulfilled its obligations for the first stage: creating an independent government, rejecting terror and violence and acting to dismantle terror infrastructures. Ha'aretz said that the PA team even advised Ezer Weizman not to link the statement to implementing the first stage of the road map in order to head off an Israeli attempt to condition the implementation of the Annapolis document on the roadmap.

Yediot Washington correspondent Orly Azulai reported that the US administration is shaping a formula that will ensure Syria's participation in the Annapolis meeting. Azulai said that the US is preparing two follow-up conferences to Annapolis: one between Israel and the Palestinians, and the other between Israel and Syria. Azulai reported that Secretary Rice will return to Israel next week to discuss the Syrian initiative. Israel Radio and other media reported that Syrian Ambassador to the US Imad Mustafa has recommended against participating in the Annapolis meeting, which he said would be a waste of time and money. Yediot also reported that North Korean experts are arming Syria with ballistic missiles and advanced sea vessels.

Ha'aretz reported that the perceived undermining of PM Ehud Olmert's peace drive by Defense Minister and Labor leader Ehud Barak is drawing increasing fire from within his own party ranks. Labor left wingers were the first to accuse Barak of sabotaging the peace effort and the Annapolis conference, but now central figures like MKs Ophir Pines-Paz, Ephraim Sneh and Amir Peretz have joined the chorus of criticism. Ha'aretz reported that Barak has supposedly noted that the cabinet has not conducted a thorough debate on Annapolis, including the implications of failure. Ha'aretz also reported that Barak is troubled over the numerous channels in which the peace process is being conducted. According to Barak, this enables the Palestinians to spot the weaknesses in the Israeli system, such as Vice PM Haim Ramon's frenzied swoop into the peace process. Ha'aretz reported that Barak's third concern is that the Annapolis meeting has set a bar of expectations that would be difficult to live up to.

In its lead story, Ha'aretz quoted reserve-duty paratroopers who completed a month of duty in the Gaza Strip last week as saying that facing militant groups such as Hamas was like taking part in a "mini-war." One reservist was quoted as saying: "We are facing an army, not gangs." Major media (banner in Maariv) reported that on Wednesday celebrated author David Grossman, whose son Uri died in last year's Lebanon War, snubbed PM Olmert at an award ceremony.

Major media reported that on Wednesday Interpol issued wanted notices for six Iranians in connection with the 1994 bombing of the Asociacion Mutual Israelita Argentina (Argentine Israelite Mutual Association) Jewish center in Buenos Aires in which 85 people were killed. Despite heavy diplomatic pressure from Iran, delegates at Interpol's annual general assembly in Morocco voted by 66 percent in favor to issue "Red Notices" seeking the extradition of these people. The media noted that Iran has repeatedly denied any link to

the bombing.

Maariv reported that on Wednesday IDF Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi surreptitiously visited the Gaza Strip with other officers.

Maariv reported that the two houses of Congress have passed the US defense budget, which includes USD 155 million for Israel to equip itself with missile interception systems. The newspaper cited the extreme satisfaction of Israeli sources over the report.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday the Yisrael Beiteinu and Shas parties coordinated their "red lines" before Annapolis.

The Jerusalem Post reported that on Wednesday the High Court of Justice gave the state one week to present data backing up its assertion that the newest sanctions against the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip will not cause unreasonable damage to Gaza residents. The justices also demanded that the state demonstrate how it will ensure, on an ongoing basis, that the electric cuts are not harming the civilian population.

Ha'aretz reported that PA Chairman Abbas slammed Israeli military activity around Nablus. In a conversation on Wednesday with MK Nadia Hilu (Labor) at his Ramallah office, Abbas said that IDF activity in the Balata refugee camp on Tuesday night undermined PA efforts to impose order.

Yediot reported that Egypt is delaying passage to the Gaza Strip of over 100 Hamas members who underwent training in Iran

Ha'aretz reported that on Wednesday Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman demanded that Defense Minister Barak outlaw the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee, the senior leadership body of Israel's Arab citizens, although its official recognition is limited.

Maariv reported that a few weeks ago US military officers discovered that U.S. ammunition stockpiles in Israel have disappeared.

The Jerusalem Post reported that National Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer has appointed a team of experts to advance the negotiations for an undersea infrastructure corridor to ship oil, natural gas, water, and electricity from Turkey to Israel. The Jerusalem Post reported that a thwarted terrorist plot in Azerbaijan showed the shakiness of that country's oil supplies to Israel. Yediot reported that Israel has secretly pledged to Morocco to support its hosting of the prestigious Expo exhibition in 2012 at the expense of South Korea and Poland. The newspaper reported that Israel's decision has caused diplomatic tension with South Korea.

The Jerusalem Post and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that Israel has contributed USD 10,000 to Mexico and a similar sum to the Dominican Republic following the damage caused by the tropical storm Noel.

Yediot reported that since 2000, 40,000 Israelis have moved from the Galilee and the Negev to central Israel.

All media reported that on Wednesday the rate of the US dollar in Israel was 3.923 shekels -- the lowest in nine years.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that PM Olmert was judged the most corrupt member of government for the second year in a row according to the Sderot Conference. According to the poll, Israelis believe that FM Tzipi Livni to be the Knesset's "most honest" minister, as they did in last year's poll.

11. Iran:

Summary:

Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: "The problem does not necessarily lie with Ahmadinejad, it lies with the Iranian regime.... Iran -- as a state, regime and society -- has decided to move forward on the path to nuclear weapons, and all that remains to see is how determined the international community will be to stop it."

Intelligence affairs correspondent Yossi Melman wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "The importance of the oil emirates, which are located on the coast of the Persian Gulf, is growing as it becomes less likely that the United Nations Security Council will impose additional sanctions against Iran."

Block Quotes:

I. "Pressure on Tehran Ineffective"

Professor Eyal Zisser, the Chairman of the Department of Middle Eastern History at Tel Aviv University, wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (11/8): "There is nothing new in the declaration by the Iranian president that his country is fully operating 3,000 centrifuges.... It is not the accuracy of these declarations that should trouble Israel. After all, whether Tehran is currently operating 3,000 centrifuges or only 2,000, what is clear -- and this is demonstrated by Ahmadinejad's statements -- is that Tehran is determined to continue to move ahead full speed, and at all costs, on the road to developing nuclear weapons. Indeed, the importance of Ahmadinejad's statements does not necessarily lie in their content, it lies in the fact that they were made. More than this, it lies in the fact that the Iranian President takes care to repeat these statements at every opportunity and occasion, despite the growing international pressure on Iran. Apparently, this international pressure is proving to be ineffective. His statements also hold a veiled threat that Iran will not cease from these efforts, no matter what the cost, and anyone who tries to stop Iran in this path will pay a high price. We should remember that the problem does not necessarily lie with Ahmadinejad, it lies with the Iranian regime, including all its leaders. Iran -- as a state, regime and society -- has decided to move forward on the path to nuclear weapons, and all that remains to see is how determined the international community will be to stop it."

II. "The Race against the Bomb"

Intelligence affairs correspondent Yossi Melman wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (11/8): "The United Arab Emirates has assumed a central place in the United States' strategy to tighten an economic siege against Iran. The importance of the oil emirates, which are located on the coast of the Persian Gulf, is growing as it becomes less likely that the United Nations Security Council will impose additional sanctions against Iran.... What makes the UAE one of the key players in the worldwide struggle being led by Washington against President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's regime is the fact that it serves as a transfer point for Iranian business -- more importantly, its clandestine business affairs.... The UAE is a particular favorite of companies and offices operated by the Revolutionary Guards.... But the Guards is not only a military force. In fact, it is a financial empire, with hundreds of companies catering to every facet of life in Iran.... It is still a long way before the sanctions and the punitive measures -- both those of the Security Council and the unilateral ones -- will lead to Iran's surrender."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Nothing Hamas does today in the Gaza Strip succeeds, as if a spell has been cast on it.... The method is to tighten the blockade and not to let up on the terror from the Gaza Strip."

Block Quotes:

" Hamas Has Lost "

Middle East affairs commentator Dr. Guy Bechor, a lecturer at the Interdisciplinary Center, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (11/8): "Gaza has cursed all those who ruled it.... Nothing Hamas does today in the Gaza Strip succeeds, as if a spell has been cast on it. The Hamas leadership has willingly imprisoned itself in a narrow prison, isolated from Israel, the PA and Egypt, and from all Arab parties. This is a victory inside a stopped-up capsule.... The relationship with Iran is proving to bring more harm than benefit. It brings in several dozen millions of dollars every year, but makes Hamas look bad in the eyes of the Arab world and in the eyes of some of the Palestinians themselves.... The Qassam rockets being fired by cells and gangs in Gaza boomerang back at the Hamas leadership. When they fire at Israel, it is blamed by the world. Even when the IDF operates in Gaza, Hamas is blamed, because it is perceived as a provocateur.... Embarrassingly enough, Hamas thought that a completely-dependent entity such as the Gaza Strip

could detach itself from Israel, which supports and nourishes it. Now they are paying the terrible price.... If we were to launch a large ground operation, Hamas and Islamic Jihad would only gain from it, since this would mean a complete reshuffle of the deck. It would be enough for us to have a great many fatalities or for the cities of the south to enter their shelters, for Hamas to be able to assert victory and achievements, as Hizbullah did [in the Second Lebanon War]. The method is to tighten the blockade and not to let up on the terror from the Gaza Strip. A new war would be a kind of reconnection, while we are lucky enough to have disengaged from Gaza and its curse. We have already suffered enough in this terrible place. Let the curse of Gaza rest on others."

13. Global Democracy:

Summary:

Foreign News Editor Arik Bachar wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "The US must condemn, even if faintly, all withdrawals from democracy.... But the option of losing Pakistan to the camp of radical Islam and the return to power of Moscow's cronies in Georgia now seems a price that the Americans are not prepared to pay."

Block Quotes:

"America's Troubles"

Foreign News Editor Arik Bachar wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (11/8): "On Wednesday Georgia joined the ever-longer list of America's troubles.... Over the past few years the West has been busy nurturing Georgia and has even talked about it joining NATO. The Russians do not like the belt that the US is trying to fasten around them from all sides, by positioning advanced missiles in the Czech Republic and Poland, and certainly not the expansion of the North Atlantic alliance in the direction of the Caucasus. All this is happening only days after the proclamation of the state of emergency in Pakistan, a nuclear state whose role in fighting terror [the US has praised].... The US must condemn, even if faintly, all

withdrawals from democracy.... But the option of losing Pakistan to the camp of radical Islam and the return to power of Moscow's cronies in Georgia now seems a price that the Americans are not prepared to pay."

JONES